

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 05587 020601Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

ACDA-07 IO-13 /100 W

-----021617Z 026043 /50

R 011408Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3492

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: GOE REACTION TO BREZNEV SPEECH ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: CAIRO 5586 (NOTAL)

1. ECONCOUNS AND EMBOFF HELD TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH SOVIET DCM AKOPOV MARCH 31. AMONG SUBJECTS DISCUSSED WAS EGYPTIAN REACTION TO BREZNEV SPEECH ON MIDDLE EAST. ACCORDING AKOPOV, INITIAL GOE REACTION UNFAVORABLE BECAUSE IT WAS BASED ON WIRE SERVICE EXCERPTS RATHER THAN FULL TEXT OF SPEECH. AFTER FULL TEXT DELIVERED, REACTION BEGAN TO SWING AROUND UNTIL SPEECH NOW PUBLICLY CONSIDERED POSITIVE STATEMENT.

2. HOWEVER, ACCORDING AKPOV, EGYPTIANS HAVE PRIVATELY ASKED FOR CLARIFICATIONS PARTS OF SPEECH INCLUDING BREZNEV STATEMENTS ON ISRAELI PASSAGE OF SUEZ CANAL, NECESSITY "SECURE BORDERS" FOR ISRAEL, BORDERS AND NON-MENTION
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PLO. AKOPOV INSISTED THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN SOVIET POSITION ON ANY OF ISSUES. REASON BREZNEV DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION PLO WAS BECAUSE SOVIET POSITION ALREADY ON RECORD AND IT WAS NOT FELT NECESSARY TO BRING IT UP AGAIN. AKOPOV CLAIMED BREZNEV DID NOT MENTION "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" AT ANY POINT IN HIS SPEECH AND HE WAS REFERRING TO POLITICAL REALITY THAT ISRAEL MUST

HAVE RECOGNIZED BORDERS FOR ANY SETTLEMENT TO BE LASTING. QUESTION OF SUEZ CANAL WAS MINOR POINT SINCE OFFICIAL GOE POSITION IS THAT ISRAEL WOULD HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO FREE PASSAGE OF CANAL AFTER STATE OF WAR ENDED UNDER 1888 CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION. AKOPOV REPEATED THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN ANY SHIFT IN SOVIET POLICY AND THAT BREZNEV STATEMENT COULD NOT BE REGARDED AS PRO-ISRAEL.

3. COMMENT. OTHER SOVIET DIPS. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFFS HAVE TAKEN SAME POSITION THAT BREZNEV SPEECH DOES NOT REFLECT CHANGE IN USSR POLICY. SOVIETS ALSO DENY THAT TIMING OF SPEECH HAD ANY SPECIAL SIGNIFIGANCE. HOWEVER, EGYPTIANS TEND TO BELIEVE TIMING OF SPEECH IMPORTANT WHEN VIEWED IN RELATION TO RECENT PNC MEETING AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S MIDDLE EAST STATEMENTS. THEREFORE, DESPITE CATEGORICAL SOVIET DENIALS, IT APPEARS EGYPTIANS STILL PERCEIVE SPEECH TO BE SOME SORT OF GESTURE TOWARDS ISRAEL. MATTHEWS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAIRO05587
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770114-1021
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770499/aaaadiql.tel
Line Count: 80
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 178407ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 CAIRO 5586
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2930787
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOE REACTION TO BREZNEV SPEECH ON MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/178407ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009